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TEACHING A SECOND DIALECT AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR TESOL.

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TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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THE RESEARCH DESCRIBED HERE IS BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE URBAN LANGUAGE STUDY OF THE CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS. THE PRINCIPLE TASK OF THE PROJECT IS TO STUDY THE SPEECH OF NEGRO CHILDREN IN A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREA IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SPECIAL MATERIALS FOR TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF NONSTANDARD NEGRO DIALECTS ARE BEING PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF THE CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES RESULTING FROM THIS STUDY. A BASIC ASSUMPTION OF THE URBAN LANGUAGE STUDY IS THAT THE NONSTANDARD NEGRO DIALECT DIFFERS SYSTEMATICALLY FROM STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH IN GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE, AS WELL AS IN PHONOLOGY AND LEXICON. WHILE NO "VERY COMPLETE OR DEFINITIVE STATEMENTS" HAVE AS YET BEEN MADE ABOUT THE NEGRO DIALECT VERB SYSTEM, ENOUGH DATA HAS BEEN ANALYZED TO INDICATE PARTICULAR PROBLEM AREAS. THESE MATERIALS BEING DEVELOPED AND USED IN EXPERIMENTAL CLASSES IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ARE DESIGNED NOT TO REPLACE THE "INFORMAL, NONSTANDARD VARIETY OF ENGLISH SPOKEN BY A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS," BUT TO TEACH THE STUDENTS TO CONTROL AN ADDITIONAL VARIETY--A STANDARD DIALECT. PRESENTED BY THE AUTHORS AT THE TESOL CONVENTION IN APRIL 1967, THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "TESOL QUARTERLY," VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3, SEPTEMBER 1967, INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20007. (AMM)

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Teaching A Second Dialect and Some Implications for TESOL

William S. Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum

Editor's note: These two papers appear together under a cover title because they are felt to complement each other both in subject matter and in approach toward the problem of dialect in the Washington, D.C. area. The papers were originally presented at the TESOL Convention, April 1967, but they have been revised somewhat to avoid duplication in ideas.

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PART ONE

A Teaching Experiment

William S. Carroll

In recent years the professional interest of linguists in the nature of dialect has been increasing. This has been accompanied by a heightened awareness of the educational problems in, especially, the inner city schools, in which are now enrolled large numbers of speakers of non-standard English. With this in mind, the Urban Language Study was begun at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D. C. The basic task of the project was and is to study the speech of Negro children of a low socio-economic class.[1]

The Urban Language Study chose as a field research site a homogeneous lower income Negro neighborhood with a fairly stable population in Washington, D. C. Observation was begun with groups of children and informant work started, mostly with boys from eight to fourteen years old. An application of this analysis is to attack the problems of teaching standard English to speakers of this dialect. The techniques we adopted to do this are the techniques used in teaching English as a foreign language.

A position basic to the Urban Language Study is that non-standard Negro dialect has a grammar of its own which differs systematically from the grammar of standard American English. This view has been amply substantiated by the research thus far conducted. The data which have been analyzed suggest that this dialect differs from standard English not only in phonology and lexicon but in grammatical structure.

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[1] The Urban Language Study was begun in October, 1965 with funds provided by the Ford Foundation. In November, 1966 the Carnegie Corporation made a grant to support the project through June, 1969.

The objectives of the study are (1) to analyze the nonstandard dialect of English spoken by Negro children of a lower socio-economic stratum in the District of Columbia, (2) to contrast the features of the dialect with those of standard English, and (3) to prepare materials for teaching standard English in the schools.

Perhaps we should pause before going any further and attempt to define what we mean by "Negro non-standard dialect." It is certainly not the speech of every Negro; many Negroes command standard English. But it is the first dialect learned by children in most urban lower-class Negro families. It is their basic language experience, even though they may, as they grow up, acquire a command of the standard or at least shift their speech in the direction of the standard. It is then not Negro in an inclusive sense, because all Negroes do not speak such a dialect. It is, rather, Negro in an exclusive sense because a person who is not a Negro is not likely at all to have a command of this dialect.

When we say that there are differences between Negro non-standard and standard American English, we do not mean, obviously, that everything is different. There are broad areas that are the same in both varieties.

Finally, what we say about Negro dialect applies to the speech of our informants and the speech communities to which they belong. We are talking about Negro speech in Washington, D. C. It is interesting to note that other researchers in other cities are discovering many of the same features that we are. For example, problems of classroom performance related to the absence of the third person singular inflection of the verb and the absence of the copula have been noted in several places. But just how general any one feature may be is still to be determined.

To return to the discussion of our approach to the teaching problems mentioned above, the following questions should be raised. Are foreign-language-teaching techniques applicable in teaching standard English to speakers of other dialects? Are there enough differences to make the adoption of new techniques worthwhile? If we adopt the traditional viewpoint toward dialect study, that dialects exhibit only fairly minor vocabulary and pronunciation differences, then we will probably feel that the differences are not great enough to require such an effort. But it can be demonstrated that there are not just a few differences and not just minor differences.

In standard English, for example, nouns are inflected to show possession and plurality. In the dialect, nouns preceded by a word indicating plurality, such as numerals and other qualifiers, are not inflected for plurality. The speakers of the dialect say things such as: *A hamburger cost twenty-five cent.* Where there is no such indicator of plurality, the noun is marked, as in: *I was playin' wif de boys.*

There is no possessive inflection. Possession is indicated by juxtaposition. *De man coat* or *my gran'fava house* are the dialect equivalents of *the man's coat* and *my grandfather's house.*

If we look at the verb system of the dialect, we find even more striking differences. In standard English, verbs have a third person singular inflection in the present general. This inflection does not exist in the dialect. *He work at the post office* is the equivalent of *He works at the post office.*

In the dialect, *He is sick* is expressed as either *He sick (today)* or *He be sick (all the time).* The absence of the copula in one sentence, which is a complete sentence in the dialect, indicates that the action or state is tem-

porary. The use of *be* indicates that the state or action is general or repetitive. This is a structural distinction that does not exist in standard English. *He is sick* is the only structure possible whether the state is temporary or habitual. The occurrence of *He sick* or *He be sick* is not just a case of random omission of the copula or the use of a peculiar form of it. The separateness of the two constructions is illustrated by the time expression that can be used with them. *He sick* is used with adverbials such as *today* or *right now*. *He be sick* is used with *all the time* or *every day*. Dialect speakers will not accept **He sick all the time* or **He be sick right now* as correct examples of the way they speak. The separateness of the constructions is further demonstrated by their negative forms. *He sick* is negated as *He ain't sick*, and *He be sick* is negated as *He don't be sick*.

In another area, the standard *He surely does work hard* is presented in the dialect by *He sure do work hard*. This is what might be expected; *do* marks emphasis, as in the standard, but is not inflected for third person singular in the dialect. But a sentence in the past tense, marked for emphasis differs more strikingly from the standard. *He bin know dat*, equivalent to standard *He did know that*, is not even understood by people who do not speak the dialect.

The inflection of verbs for past tense occurs in the dialect. But the use of this inflection differs from its use in standard. Its use is partly determined by phonological rules: it occurs in the stream of speech before vowels, but not before consonants or silence—*He passed out* and *He pass by*. Its use seems further to be determined by the presence or absence of time adverbs and other contextual clues. We still do not know enough about the verb system to make very complete or definitive statements about it.

But the teaching problems are obvious. The possessive inflection, the third person singular inflection, and certain forms of the copula, for example, are lacking and must be added to the students' grammatical repertory. The noun plural inflection and the past tense inflection are known by the students, but they must be taught a different range of usage.

The two separate structures in the case of *He sick* and *He be sick* have to be shown to be the equivalent of only one standard structure, *he is sick;* and the contrasts between *am*, *are* and *is*, and *was* and *were* need to be taught.

These are clearly problems of a type comparable to that facing speakers of foreign languages learning English. Just quoting rules for the students does not enable them to use the required forms in the proper places.

The examples of points of difference in the grammar of the dialect and standard English are all quite clear cut. The teaching of standard phonology is more problematic. Pronunciation varies from region to region in this country. Regional pronunciation that is acceptable in its home area may not be accepted outside that area. Let us now consider some of the problems involved in the choice of pronunciation features to be included in a program of standard English for speakers of other dialects.

As stated earlier, although Negro dialect manifests differences from other varieties of English, it is not different in every respect. Take for instance the

phonology. In the dialect, /θ/, the initial consonant in words such as *thick*, is retained in initial position and replaced by /f/ in medial or final position, as, for example, in /wɪfawt/ instead of *without* and /brɛf/ instead of *breath*. The initial consonant /ð/, in words such as *there*, is generally absent from the dialect. It is replaced by /d/ initially in words like /dɛm/ instead of *them*, and medially and finally by /v/ in words like /favə/ instead of *father* and /briyv/ instead of *breathe*. This distributional phenomenon seems to be restricted to the speech of Negroes; it is one of the diagnostic features of Negro dialect. It is also a clear cut deviation from standard English pronunciation. Most teachers of Negro children are aware of the problem and feel definitely that it merits consideration in the classroom. Other problems are not as clear cut, however. In Washington, most of the Negro migration has been from Virginia and the Carolinas which are Southern states. Consequently, many of the phonological features in the speech of Washington Negroes are Southern features. They are not features that would be stigmatized in the South, since they are not class markers in that region. However, in most cities in the North, these features are found only in the speech of the Negro ghettos and possibly among the white migrants from Appalachia. As a result, these forms are often remarked upon as substandard.

A case in point is the neutralization of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ (the vowels in *bit* and *bet*, respectively) before nasal consonants so that *pen* and *pin* are both pronounced *pin*. This pronunciation feature is common to all Southern speech areas and to all social classes of speakers in those areas. We were asked by one of the teachers we were working with for a lesson to teach and practice the discrimination of these two vowels in this environment. The teacher, of course, is from a Northern speech area and had not encountered Southern speech before. We wrote such a lesson and discovered, as we were sure we would, that most of the teachers were unsure in their presentation of the lesson because they themselves did not control this distinction in their own speech. Washington, after all, is not in the North.

Another example of the problem is the monophthongization of /ay/, that is, the reduction of the diphthong /ay/ as in *ride* to a simple vowel /a/ as in /rad/. In dialect, the diphthong is retained before voiceless consonants as in *write* /rayt/, but reduced to a simple vowel before voiced consonants and in open syllables, as in /rad/ *ride* and /fla/ *fly*. But again, this phenomenon is widespread in the South. Educated people use this vowel. Even English teachers use it.

In the North, all of the features I have mentioned above are vulnerable to criticism. People hearing them are apt to react unfavorably to them; teachers will probably try to correct them. Though they are acceptable in parts of the country, in others they will be labeled substandard or, more bluntly, Negro dialect, whether they are or not.

The examples just given are examples of the types of teaching problems we have attempted to deal with in the series of lessons we have produced.

In October of 1966, then, we began working in the District of Columbia

public schools. With the help of Mrs. Charlotte Brooks, the supervising director for junior high and high schools, we began meeting with ten teachers to discuss the nature of the dialect and its relation to standard English, as well as the oral-aural teaching techniques needed for teaching the experimental grammar and pronunciation lessons we were producing.

These lessons are constructed along standard foreign-language-teaching lines—oral drills based on points of difference in the grammar and phonology of the dialect and standard English. Since the language system native to the children is so different from standard English as to constitute a quasi-foreign-language situation, it was felt that oral drilling, to force the students to repeat and produce standard English utterances, was necessary to initiate standard language habits. With the grammatical system of the dialect so different from that of standard, it is not surprising that the children experience difficulty and even bewilderment in their attempts to produce the standard English demanded of them in the classroom. There is interference from the dialect on every level, and only carefully structured drilling on the points of difference can overcome this in most children. Haphazard corrections such as "Don't say ain't" are not enough. The child must be familiar enough with the standard system to know that *isn't* or *didn't* is required instead of *ain't*, and he must have enough practice to produce the required form automatically.

Discussion of the dialect by the teachers in the classroom was conducted in terms of "casual" versus "more formal" styles of speech. No attempt was made to stamp out the dialect. This, after all, is not possible, for the child does not come from an environment where standard English is spoken. He has to survive on the playgrounds and in the streets, and he knows, even if his English teacher will not admit it, that using language so very different from that of his associates will only mark him as peculiar and add to his difficulties.

Instead of an all-or-nothing approach, the materials were designed to add to the student's language skills by helping him achieve command of another style, that of standard English. The concept of behavior appropriate to the situation was stressed—just as a person wears different clothes to a dance or on a picnic, he adapts his language to different situations.

The lessons were accepted by the teachers after they had overcome their original uneasiness, although they were very cooperative from the beginning. They were uneasy for three reasons: (1) they were unfamiliar with the oral-aural techniques required by the lessons and were afraid of making mistakes; (2) they were uncomfortable about the term "linguistic approach" because they had not had any training in linguistics; (3) they suspected that the materials might "lower standards" since they were the outgrowth of a dialect study.

By now these fears have been allayed. The teachers, from ten different elementary, junior high, senior high and vocational high schools have become familiar with the techniques and are convinced of their validity. The teachers have come to accept, openly and frankly, the existence of the dialect and its role in the childrens' lives.

Ironically enough, the students did not require much convincing. They are, in general, much more aware of their language situation than their teachers are. They were quick to admit that their casual style of speech was different from the more formal style demanded of them by their teachers in the classroom. Consequently, oral drilling of a type used in the foreign-language classroom did not bore them because they quickly grasped the point of it.

While their teachers might say (as some have done) that in all their twenty years in the classroom, they had never heard language like this, the students could say, if anybody bothered to ask them, that they said, "Every mornin' whin I git up, dey be at work" instead of "Every morning when I get up, they're at work," and that in words like *brother*, they use a *v* sound instead of a *th* sound.

The real problem we encountered, then, is one of teacher training, making the teacher aware first of the existence of the dialect, second of the systematic nature of its differences from the standard, and third of the usefulness of materials based on a contrastive analysis of the differences.

PART TWO

The Concept of Appropriateness and Developing Materials for TESOL

Irwin Feigenbaum

In our teaching in the District of Columbia public schools, we were not concerned with replacing the informal, nonstandard variety of English spoken by a large number of the students (which, in fact, may be impossible to do). We were, instead, concerned with teaching the students to control an additional variety, a standard one. If we describe "standard" English as that variety of English used by educated, well-placed members of the society, we can readily see that an inadequate control of the standard variety severely restricts the opportunities for a person's advancement in the society. Inadequate control of standard English can create difficulty in learning to read the standard (perhaps the most important single skill to be learned in school) and in acquiring other skills taught in school, through the standard.

As descriptive linguists, we cannot say that one variety of language is intrinsically superior or inferior to another, but sociolinguistics does provide a criterion for evaluation and selection—*appropriateness*. We can ask the following questions: Is the variety of language used appropriate to the social situation in which it is used? Does this variety call the least attention to itself when it is used in the given social situation? Using this criterion, we can determine which variety of English is appropriate at home and which is appropriate for school activities.

The monodialectal speaker of stan-

dard English makes use of many different language styles: from the most formal to the most informal situations, he chooses an appropriate style from a series of styles. The styles vary in degree of formality, and together they form a continuum. The bidialectal speaker of standard and nonstandard English also makes use of many different styles. However, because the nonstandard dialect is very different from standard English, both phonologically and grammatically, there is no such continuum: there is a sharp break as the speaker goes from an informal style (nonstandard) to a formal one (standard). The shift from nonstandard to standard is, in some respects, similar to the shift from one language to another. For this reason, we have assumed that second-language pedagogy is applicable to second-dialect teaching.

One situation in which standard English is appropriate is in the classroom, during class activities. As teachers, we are concerned with this situation, and we are justified in changing the variety of English used in this situation only. It is impossible to control the variety of English outside classroom activities, and, after all, nonstandard English is the appropriate variety for much (or all) of the student's life outside the classroom.

In teaching speakers of nonstandard English to speak standard, we must sometimes teach new, standard forms and provide the students with the opportunity to practice these forms in appropriate situations. Very frequently, the task is not one of teaching unknown forms. Many students have a passive control of these forms; they have heard them, and they understand them. This latter case is especially descriptive of junior and senior high school students, who have often encountered standard English in school and on television. It is, then, a matter of helping the students gain an active control of standard, so that they can use it with ease and fluency in the appropriate situations.

We have found that second-language-teaching methods are applicable to second-dialect teaching, but, of course, some adaptation is necessary. For example, native speakers of English will not patiently perform in repetition-type drills, especially as a group; they do not feel the need for this practice, and they feel that simple mimicry is not a suitable class activity. One way to alleviate this problem is to replace repetition drills with simple substitution drills in which the substitution slot is away from that part of the sentence on which we are working: for repetitions of the third person singular present tense of verbs, the students substitute direct objects in sentences like *In the winter he wears corduroys* or *She likes black fish-net stockings*. On the other hand, the students enjoy manipulation drills of the substitution and transformation types, and we were able to use a conventional English-as-a-second-language format in writing these drills.

TESL methodology has helped us in arriving at a methodology for preparing materials and for teaching in this new situation. Now it would be interesting and revealing to look in the other direction, at TESL from the vantage point of teaching a second dialect, for, in examining it from a different context, we can gain some insights that might prove useful in the more familiar area of foreign-language teaching.

The situation most similar to that of standard English as a second dialect is that of English as a second language. In many countries English is the official language and, as such, is the medium for instruction in schools, and is used for government affairs and in dealings with people from other linguistic backgrounds. The native language is retained as a necessary means of accomplishing much of the business of everyday life. In addition, it may be the language of social and religious activities.

It would be useful to ask: What type or types of pedagogical materials are to be used in this situation? This question can be more precisely answered by asking: In what situations is English to be used? What are the appropriate varieties of English for these situations? As long as the materials writers are native speakers of English, they can rely somewhat on "feel"—in some cases, this may be the only criterion currently available. But the variety of English to be taught must be carefully and closely defined so that we (1) teach the necessary appropriate forms and (2) do not spend time teaching unnecessary or inappropriate forms.

Another common situation is that of the foreigner in an English-speaking country. This is the situation with which we are most familiar. The problem of appropriateness is very difficult here because it is necessary to have control of appropriate varieties of English for several different situations.

One way to relieve the problem of choosing forms to teach for each situation is to choose forms that have widespread appropriateness, that is, forms that are appropriate in many social situations. For example, somewhere in the first lesson of many English-as-a-second-language textbooks is the sentence *I'm fine, thank you.* Often it occurs in a substitution drill with the alternate *I'm fine, thanks. Thank you* is appropriate in more situations than *thanks.* Do we wish to spend time drilling *thanks* and explaining when it is appropriate (or inappropriate)? Unless we specifically choose to teach this form, for whatever reason, it is more desirable to avoid it and teach only *thank you*—even if this means one less pattern for substitution work.

This problem of choice occurs with grammatical and phonological material, and at different levels of mastery. Are we going to teach /fɪfθ/ or /fɪθ/, or should we teach both? And what about *It's me* and *It's I*?

At some time, we may find it necessary to select only one form to teach (due to limitations in course length, for example). If we cannot teach a form with widespread appropriateness, it would be wiser to select one that is formal. It is interesting to note that, when speaking with a person who does not speak English very well, we accept a style that is too formal, although we find humorous a style that is too informal. Because we are concerned with teaching a variety of language that calls the least attention to itself in a given situation, it seems better to lean towards formality.

In training teachers of English as a second language, we stress the importance of giving "constant, correct models." Another word to describe the desired models is "appropriate." Dialogs give a great amount of help, even to the native speaker. The teacher can "see" the individual social situation and can

present "constant, correct, and appropriate" models. That there are different varieties of English, all equally correct but with varying appropriateness according to the situation, should be included in teacher training. Sociolinguists are now investigating style differences. This information is needed in teacher preparation as well as in materials development.

Another point regarding appropriateness must be considered—appropriate geographical dialect. In American English, this is more crucial phonologically than grammatically. We have been regularly confronted with problems like the following: In this nonstandard dialect, /r/ does not occur post-vocalically (except after /ə/). Are we justified in teaching the students to produce /r/ in this position, although it does not occur in the standard varieties of English found in several areas of the United States? We can only answer this in terms of geographical appropriateness. Relying on native speaker "feel" does not help resolve this problem in teaching English to speakers of other languages. There are often complaints from students who, after several years of instruction with different teachers, are unsure which pronunciation to use.

In developing materials for use in classrooms in the United States, we have had a very important, but frequently overlooked, aspect of teaching brought vividly to our attention. Foreign-language students will very trustingly practice many things that are apparently pointless. The native speaker will not stand for this. The content of the lessons must be real, and the treatment must be interesting. Our students have been candid in expressing any lack of interest, and they have not hesitated to say that something sounds peculiar, that is, inappropriate.

It has been valuable to examine two aspects of teaching English, standard English as a second dialect or English as a foreign language. The constant comparison of these two aspects will continue to be very revealing in the areas of materials development, teaching methodology, and student performance.